

Gender and fisheries and aquaculture — From policy to implementation. Lessons learned from Germany's policy for sustainable development

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Gender policy and strategy

The question of whether gender issues in fisheries are any different from other natural resource-based sectors has often been posed. Disparities that exist between men and women are documented (WorldFish 2010; Harrison 2001). However, women's involvement in and their contribution to fisheries are more significant than generally believed or indicated by statistics (Kleiber et al. 2014; Weeratunge and Snyder 2009).

Globally, across most cultural, social and political and economic strata, the role of women is still believed to relate more to post-harvest and marketing activities rather than fishing or aquaculture itself. While global average figures may support this perception, the real importance of women at country level remains thus masked. Women fishers and fish farmers of the world's two major fish producing countries, China and India, represent 21% and 24% of all fishers (FAO 2012a). Women in West Africa, Cambodia and Thailand often own and

manage fishing boats and may even have their own fishing gear. In Ghana, income from fishers' wives is vital for supporting the entire fishing industry as they invest in canoes and other gear and give loans to husbands and other fishers. Fisherwomen in the Congo, Cambodia, Thailand, the Philippines, and most of the South Pacific islands, contradict the perceived role of females as gleaners only.

Women have also assumed a leading role in the rapid growth of aquaculture (fish, shrimps, mussels, seaweed, crab fattening), with their participation along the aquaculture value chain (production, transforming, and marketing) higher than in capture fisheries.

Aquaculture is promoted as a development strategy as it enables poor women to operate low technology and low input systems that are an extension of their domestic tasks. Entry into aquaculture appears to have fewer gender barriers, perhaps because this sector developed outside cultural traditions. Bangladeshi women make up to 60% of fish farmers, and many are successful entrepreneurs (FAO 2012a). In

Sri Lanka, 30% of those engaged in the production and breeding of ornamental fish are women (FAO 2012a). In Waigina, Choiseul Province of the Solomon Islands, women participate in all stages of seaweed production, but predominantly in other than post-harvest production steps, which contradicts the stereotyped role often attributed to women in aquaculture (Kronen 2012).



Seaweed farming Waigina, Choiseul Province, Solomon Islands.

Photo by M. Kronen.

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*Tsoi fish market, Papua New Guinea.
Photo by M. Kronen.*

Even though commonalities with regard to gender issues in fisheries — as well as other natural-resource based sectors — have emerged across geographical and cultural borders, and generally it is recognised that women are likely to constitute an important part of the rural poor who depend on fisheries, agriculture and natural resources for their survival, women are still often excluded as a user group from decision processes over their management (FAO, IFAD and World Bank 2009). This fact is somehow surprising given the many developments in gender equality and equity.

At the policy level, the promotion of gender equality has been addressed in numerous international agreements and instruments, including the Treaty of Rome (Article 119) in 1957. Since the UN Conference on Environment (UNCED), Rio de Janeiro, 1992, and the Beijing Platform for Action (1995), and in particular the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) established following the Millennium Summit of the United Nations in 2000, the gender issue has become increasingly recognised in the fisheries and aquaculture sector.

At the global level, and pertinent to the fisheries and aquaculture sector, the European Commission's Agenda for Change 2011 and the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development 2010–2015 Action Plan provide a promising basis for further improvement at the policy level. This promise is further supported by the most recent Gender and Environment Forum, held in parallel with the First UN Environmental Assembly (UNEA) of the UN Environment Program (UNEP) (Nairobi, Kenya, 23–27 June 2014), with a focus on gender equality and women's empowerment as an integral aspect of environmental management.



*Women fisher, Maskelynes, Vanuatu.
Photo by M. Kronen.*

Strategies followed, for instance, the 2003 European Commission funded IDDRA UK Cotonou workshop on "Room to manoeuvre: Gender and coping strategies in the fisheries sector"; the 2007 FAO's "Gender policies for responsible fisheries", which promoted policies to support gender equity and livelihoods in small-scale fisheries

through studying the gender implications of ongoing changes in the sector, including resource access rights, marketing arrangements, governance and changes linked to aquaculture; the 2010 Phuket Consensus on aquaculture (FAO 2012b), designed to provide opportunities for meaningfully mainstreaming gender in fisheries management and aquaculture development; and the emergence in May 2012 of the “Zero draft of international guidelines for securing sustainable small-scale fisheries”, which particularly addresses gender equity and equality (FAO 2012c).

So far, there is no systematic but rather patchy (Williams et al. 2012) inclusion of gender issues in fisheries and aquaculture development initiatives and projects. Today, the statement that the gender issue in the fisheries sector is yet in its infancy still holds, underlining the need to boost the transition from policy and strategies to implementation. Programmes and projects continue often to be designed with a focus on ecosystem effects of fishing, illegal fishing, or improving fishery statistics (Williams 2010), rather than on the specific needs of women and men involved in the sector (Lentisco and Alonso 2012).

In the following, some emerging issues from experiences and lessons learned in the framework of German development cooperation with a focus on fisheries and aquaculture are presented to highlight some of the challenges in transferring policies and strategies at the implementation level.

Gender in Germany's Development Cooperation

“Equal rights, equal duties, equal opportunities and equal power for women and men” is one of the basic principles of German development policy. Promoting gender equality is a cross-cutting issue that touches all areas of German development cooperation and has led to the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development's (BMZ) adoption of the 2001 Gender Equality Strategy. Germany's development policy pursues a dual approach to the promotion of gender equality: gender mainstreaming and women-specific support measures.

The German Agency for International Cooperation or GIZ, an international enterprise owned by the German Federal Government, works on behalf of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). GIZ operates in many fields across more than 130 countries. As a federal enterprise, it supports the German Government in achieving its objectives in the field of international cooperation for sustainable development.

In line with BMZ's basic principles on gender, GIZ's Gender Strategy (2012), “Gender pays off”, lays out a framework and sets a goal to comprehensively promote gender equality — both in the services that it delivers and within partner countries, and within the company itself. The strategy builds on the approaches applied and lessons learned by its three predecessor organisations (German Development Service — DED, German Agency for Technical Cooperation — GTZ, Capacity Building International, Germany — InWEnt).

GIZ has translated the dual approach by promoting gender equality in partner countries through the implementation of projects that specifically aim to reduce discrimination and inequality, and through promoting equality by mainstreaming gender at all societal levels and within different sectors. The different situations and concerns of women and men are taken into account to help eliminate gender-based socio-cultural and structural inequalities and discrimination, and to overcome structural



Kavieng, sale station for BdM, Papua New Guinea. Photo by M. Kronen.

causes of poverty and of social and political instability as a contribution to the sustainable development of partner countries.

Major activities aim at assisting partner countries in their efforts to anchor international agreements in their national legislation, policy directions and implementation to ensure women's rights, as well as to support state and non-governmental actors in gender mainstreaming at all levels, including gender analysis, collection of gender disaggregated data and capacity development.

BMZ and GIZ equally consider that their gender policy and strategy are subject to change, requiring constant monitoring and adjusting of measures to increase effectiveness and to ensure success. Within this context, the BMZ Gender Equality in Development Policy fact sheets (BMZ 2012) and a set of fact-sheets on Gender in Rural Development (GIZ 2013) were developed to assess the results and impacts of the gender policy, as well as at the implementation level. The set of fact sheets on best practices and lessons learned encompass seven focal themes: (i) gender and rural development; (ii) gender and agricultural extension; (iii) gender and access to land; (iv) gender and food and nutrition security; (v) gender and fisheries and aquaculture; (vi) gender and livestock production; and (vii) gender and value chains.

Each fact sheet follows a uniform structure: background information, action steps and best practices based on experience, stumbling blocks and lessons learned, and finally, questions to be answered in gender studies on the sector concerned.

Lessons learned from German Cooperation in fisheries and aquaculture

However, not unlike other policy and implementing agencies, both entities, BMZ and GIZ, still seek to improve processes and instruments for the application and promotion of gender mainstreaming and equality, particular in the fisheries and aquaculture sector. Analyses of project experiences have resulted in a number of lessons learned, i.e.:

- A focus on gender in all steps of the project cycle needs to be institutionalised to ensure the adoption and sustainability of planned impacts, and to align project activities with country policies and legislation.
- The need for gender-disaggregated data in the fisheries and aquaculture sector cannot be sufficiently stressed. Quantitative and qualitative data is vital for informed, effective and targeted planning of project activities that foster gender equality and improve economic development of the fisheries and aquaculture sector.
- Gender analysis in fisheries and aquaculture must be flexible in order to respond to the

complexity of cultural and socio-economic characteristics and dynamics, including regional differences in target groups.

- The role of gender discrimination in the current employment practices of fisheries and aquaculture industries needs to be scrutinised. Development cooperation needs to highlight that such practices threaten not only the credibility of policy-makers, but also jeopardise the sustainable livelihoods of fishers' families and the economic success of the sector.
- Gender equity and equality are essential for decision-making in fisheries resource management as well as at all levels of the so-called "deck-to-fish" value chain, in which both women and men have important roles to play.

In conclusion, and as a guide for gender studies in fisheries and aquaculture, five major questions to be answered are formulated:

Sustainable livelihood, improved food security and sustainable resource management

1. What are the key factors to be addressed in the project region for ensuring that women have equal access to and control over the fisheries/aquaculture value chain?
2. How can the sustainable livelihood framework be best integrated into a community-based fisheries/aquaculture management approach for achieving gender equality and equity?
3. Which are the most appropriate quantitative and qualitative indicators to evaluate and monitor the impact and effectiveness of gender-sensitive fisheries and aquaculture policies and projects, in particular their contribution to reducing gender gaps?

Mainstreaming gender in fisheries and aquaculture

4. Based on project experience, develop and disseminate a model for the successful promotion and adoption of gender mainstreaming at the policy level and for large fisheries development projects.
5. What are the minimum/main disaggregated data sets on social and gender related aspects at the macro level in fisheries and aquaculture?

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